

A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme – Key Facts

We carefully consider a number of factors in the ongoing development of the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme, including capacity, safety, connectivity, resilience, affordability and economic benefits, environmental impact and consultation feedback.

Road capacity and journey times

Improve and enhance capacity, whilst making journey times more reliable and resilient.

Our proposals are designed to **ensure the road is futureproofed**, not just address current issues. The dual carriageway, including the junctions at either end and along the route, **has been assessed against how it would perform 15 years after opening – 2043.**

- The A358 between Taunton and Southfields roundabout is mostly single carriageway and traffic regularly exceeds the capacity that the existing road was designed for. Many current road users divert onto smaller local roads, leading to increasing local traffic and congestion, as well as poor air quality.
- Proposals for the upgraded A358 – the dual carriageway and the junctions at either end and along the route - are based on predicted traffic demand, which takes into account future development proposals, such as new housing or employment sites. This shows that traffic will increase, therefore issues will get worse if not addressed.
- The upgraded A358 would cater for more than double the current traffic flow. It would reduce journey times on the main route and on a number of local roads. More predictable journey times would reduce the cost and inconvenience of unexpected delays.
- Detail about our traffic modelling, traffic flows and journey times, is available in our [Technical Traffic Note](#), available via the National Highways project webpage – www.nationalhighways.co.uk/a358-taunton-to-southfields
 - Further detail about **traffic flow information for the main route and local roads** is available via our online [interactive traffic flow webmap](#)
 - Further detail about **routes and journey times for a selection of locations in the area** is available via our online [interactive trip route and journey time webmap](#).
- The methodology and results of the traffic modelling will be reported in more detail in the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report (ComMA) submitted with the Development Consent Order (DCO) application.

Economic growth

Drive economic growth, create new jobs and facilitate growth in housing by providing a free-flowing and reliable connection between the south east and the south west.

A 2018 study - [Improving journeys to the South West The case for the A303/A358 corridor](#) - found that:

- The south west's productivity (as measured by Gross Value Added or GVA) is 24% below the national average.
 - At £4.5bn a year, the south west has the highest domestic tourism expenditure of any UK region.
 - Around 120,000 new jobs and 100,000 new homes are expected across the south west by 2021, with even greater growth after that.
 - In a survey of businesses, 77% said their site would be more viable as a business location if the route was an end-to-end dual carriageway.
- The upgraded A358 will make journey times quicker, more reliable and resilient. This will drive economic growth generating an estimated **£37.7m per year for South Somerset and Somerset West and Taunton**, as well as creating **approximately 630 jobs**.
 - This road is a crucial freight corridor that helps transport goods between the south east and south west of England. A free-flowing dual carriageway and more reliable journeys will prevent delays from holding up the transportation of vital goods to and from the region. This will save time and money for businesses, which will promote economic growth and encourage investment.
 - The estimated cost of the A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme at the time of the Preferred Route Announcement was within a range of £250m-£500m, with a Benefit Cost Ratio of 1.2. We constantly review and monitor these costs as the scheme progresses, working closely with the Department for Transport, to ensure we are striking the right balance between scheme objectives and costs.
 - An independent economic assessment commissioned by the Local Authorities and the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership in 2013 demonstrated that improving the whole A303/A30/A358 corridor would:
 - create 21,400 jobs and deliver a £39bn boost to the economy
 - deliver £21.2bn of taxation, welfare savings, disposable income and tourism benefits
 - create £1.9bn in transport benefits from reduced journey times and greater resilience
 - save 1807 fatal or serious casualties
 - reduce carbon emissions by 9%
 - National Highways A358/A303 corridor feasibility study (2015) is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/a303-a358-and-a30-corridor-feasibility-study-overview Further detail is available in [Improving journeys to the south west The case for the A303/A358 corridor \(2018\)](#).

- Further details of the economic appraisal of the scheme that forms the basis for the value for money assessment will be set out in the Combined Modelling and Appraisal Report (ComMA), which will be submitted with the DCO application.

Safety

Make the road safer, by providing additional capacity and reducing driver stress.

The comparison for the whole corridor shows that the existing A358 is less safe than a strategic A-road of equivalent standard.

A comparison of accident rates indicates that the likelihood of an accident occurring along the A358 is **more than 30% higher than would be expected based on the national average data.**

On some sections of the route, **the accident rate is two to three times higher than the national average.**

Between Thornfalcon signals and Southfields, **the likelihood of an accident involving a fatality is 43% higher** compared to roads of the same type across the National Highways network.

- National accident data shows that accident rates on dual carriageways are around half of what they are on single carriageway roads.
- The main reasons for the higher-than-average accident rates on the A358 are:
 - Many sections of the existing A358 are single carriageway and often narrow and congested. Overtaking on single carriageway sections can lead to head on collisions. The new dual carriageway would provide safe overtaking opportunities along the full length of the route.
 - Multiple access roads and private property accesses along the route. Having traffic joining, leaving or crossing a main road disrupts traffic flow, leading not only to congestion but also increasing the risk of accidents. The proposed new split-level junctions limit the amount of conflicting vehicle turning movements at the junctions, for example by eliminating the need for right turning traffic to cross the opposing mainline A358 traffic.
- **The upgraded A358 will reduce the likelihood of accidents even with the significant increases in traffic flow and, when accidents occur, significantly reduce the likelihood of serious injuries or fatalities.**
- **Safety for walkers, cyclists, and horse-riders will also be improved** by separating them from the A358 traffic by providing a parallel corridor of improvements, including new controlled crossing points, bridges and public rights of way, which will help to reduce conflict on the network between different users.
- Further detail and data on accident analysis is available in our [Technical Traffic Note](#).

Environment

Protect the environment and look for opportunities to improve it, minimising any unnecessary impact of the scheme on the surrounding natural and historic environment and landscape

National Highways' commitments to net zero:

- net zero for our own operations by 2030
 - **75% reduction by 2025, via vehicle electrification and green energy**
- net zero maintenance and construction emissions by 2040
 - **50% reduction by 2030, via low carbon materials/plant & supply chain incentives**
- net zero road user emissions by 2050
 - **50% reduction in car emissions by circa 2030 via electric vehicles, enabled by charging rollout**

Details available at www.nationalhighways.co.uk/netzerohighways

- Roads and cars are and will continue to be an integral part of our transport system. Government and National Highways have set out ambitious programmes for how road travel will decarbonise.
- The future of road travel is a zero carbon one, powered by renewable electricity, hydrogen and biofuels. Government has indicated that the sale of new petrol and diesel cars will be phased out by 2030 and its Transport Decarbonisation Plan puts Britain on a trajectory to do the same for heavy goods vehicles from 2040. **95% of National Highways' network is already within 20 miles of an electric chargepoint.**
- On the A358, proposals would reduce pollution from queuing traffic, particularly in Henlade, where average daily traffic levels would reduce **to 4,000 by 2038** (Annual Average Daily Traffic), which would enable the Air Quality Management Area to be improved.
- Our proposals for cycle routes and new crossings for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders would improve safety and encourage active travel.
- We're committed to protecting the natural environment that surrounds our roads. Our environmental proposals include:
 - **New crossings such as mammal tunnels and ledges** on structures to encourage animals to travel safely across the route and incorporating **new mammal fencing at key crossing points.**
 - **New areas for habitat creation** 'offsite'- to include creation of woodland, reptile receptor sites and new watercourse creation to support species.
 - **Hedgerow improvements to enhance connectivity to adjacent woodland areas** for foraging and commuting bats and additional benefits for breeding birds and pollinators.

- Our early environmental findings are available in our Preliminary Environment Impact (PEI) Report published at statutory consultation, along with a Non-Technical Summary version of the PEI Report, available via the project webpage.
- Our Environment Statement, which will be submitted as part of our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, will reflect the evolution of the preliminary design, informed by consultation feedback, surveys and the ongoing Environmental Impact Assessment.

Communities

Improve local people's quality of life.

- The route selected for the upgraded A358 was identified as having the least impact on existing homes, public open space and the countryside including avoiding the ancient woodlands at Huish Copse and Stoke Wood.
- The upgrade will lead to improvements in quality of life through creating new economic opportunities, reducing the use of local roads as alternative routes, improving safety for all road users (including walkers, cyclists and horse-riders) and improving journey time reliability and air quality.
- Our proposals would improve safety and encourage active travel. This includes:
 - 4 traffic free or lightly trafficked bridges
 - 17 new public rights of way
 - an 'offline' cycle route running from the M5 junction 25 to Southfields roundabout, which would use existing lightly trafficked roads and traffic free tracks
- We have engaged extensively with local people – this has included a series of community forums alongside four rounds of public consultation.

Support for the scheme

- The A358 Taunton to Southfields Dualling Scheme has been identified as a strategic route and is part of the government's second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), which identifies parts of the road network that need upgrading to improve safety, connectivity and reliability for its users.
- Local councils and business leaders agree that upgrading the rest of the A303/A358 corridor to dual carriageway would help improve the south west's connections to neighbouring regions, unlocking its potential for growth and supporting plans for more homes and jobs. The project is supported by groups including Visit Somerset, Peninsula Transport, Heart of the South West LEP and Somerset Chambers of Commerce.

Dualling the whole route

- Our proposals are **designed to ensure the road is futureproofed**, not just address current issues. The dual carriageway has been assessed against how it would perform 15 years after opening – 2043.

- Traffic will increase, therefore existing issues on the A358 - congestion, use of local roads as alternative routes and safety issues - will get worse if not addressed.
- If some sections are not upgraded, road users would continue to avoid these by diverting onto smaller roads and through local villages. The issue of having traffic joining or crossing a fast-moving carriageway would continue in these sections, impacting the safety and performance of the whole route.
- **Dualling only partial sections of the route, or only improving the roundabouts at each end, will not address the problems on the A358.**

Junctions

- Our proposals on the access points and layout of junctions along the route has been informed by the following key factors:
 - **Safety and performance standards** - ensuring that the scheme meets the highest safety and performance standards for all users.
 - **Capacity** - junctions are the parts of the road network where there is the most conflict between traffic movements which restricts overall capacity along the route.
 - **Different types of road users** – being mindful of the rural nature of the area, our design permits local and agricultural traffic to join the A358, as well as providing local connections for rural villages, in the safest practicable way.
- The location, size and layout of the two junctions we have proposed - Mattock's Tree Green and Ashill – have been designed to cater for the predicted volume of traffic and would deliver a safe route whilst still providing access to the local road network.
- Around the proposed Mattock's Tree Green junction, the existing Ash Road junction with the A358 is a particular **area where accidents are higher than the national average** - nine accidents occurred over the five-year period reviewed. Our proposals mean that Ash Road would no longer connect direct to the A358 or the Mattock's Tree Green junction, which would improve safety and would also make it less attractive to traffic wanting to cut through to southern parts of Taunton.
- This new junction would also improve access for communities living in West Hatch and Hatch Beauchamp, provide access to the Somerset Progressive School, the Huish Woods Scout Campsite and local businesses at Nightingale Farm Units, and reduce use of local roads as alternative routes, along with providing improvements to the existing priority junction connecting to the A378 towards Langport and Wrantage.